

**Easter Sunday 2024**  
**Homily of Bishop John Barres**  
**St. Agnes Cathedral**  
**March 31, 2024**

In *The Everlasting Man*, G.K. Chesterton captured the power of our Lord's Resurrection in history. He wrote: "Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave."

This Easter and every Easter we celebrate this Risen Everlasting Man who knew his way out of the grave and who invites us, the Catholic Church on Long Island, and the Universal Church to a great Resurrection.

Easter Sunday is a time for us to realize even more deeply that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of our lives.

It is the foundation of our daily reality and existence.

St. Paul writes: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile." (1 Cor 15:17)

The Resurrection of Christ is the foundation of our faith and the "fulcrum" of Salvation history and of our lives on earth.

Bishop Robert Barron writes: "If Jesus did not truly rise, then his claims to be speaking and acting in the person of God would be invalidated; and if these are invalidated, then all talk of Incarnation is negated; and if Incarnation does not hold, then the dogma of the Trinity falls away. And if the Trinity collapses, all speech about the Holy Spirit is nugatory (or irrelevant). And if there is no Holy Spirit, it makes no sense to refer to the Church or to its sacraments. Finally, if Christ has not been raised, then we have no reasonable hope of personal resurrection...90% of the Creed craters in upon itself if Resurrection faith disappears."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bishop Robert Barron, *Light from Light: A Theological Reflection on the Nicene Creed* (Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire Academic, 2021), 102-103.

So as believing Catholics opening ourselves at every moment to deeper and more integrated belief, we are Resurrection existentialists.

We are Resurrection realists for “if the Resurrection of Christ is the key to the meaning of all Scripture, and if Scripture is the key to the meaning of all reality, then the resurrection of Christ is the key to all reality.”<sup>2</sup>

We believe in an “Easter Realism”<sup>3</sup> because we see reality illumined by the “resplendent glow” of the Paschal Candle, the Light of the Paschal Mystery, the Light of the Victory of the Risen Christ which conquers and illumines all darkness.<sup>4</sup>

Fyodor Dostoevsky, the great 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian novelist (1821-1881), once said that he came to the Christian faith through the furnace of doubt.

Dostoevsky’s insight is that there is a shadow atheist in every believer and there is a shadow believer in every atheist.

Paradoxically, some believers act as if God *does not* exist.

Some atheists act as if God *does* exist.

So, on this Easter Sunday, we ask ourselves this question: do we profess belief in the bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ and then live as if the Resurrection of Jesus Christ never actually occurred?

Or does our belief in the Resurrection completely transform the way we live and interpret life?

Liturgical theologian Msgr. Kevin Irwin states: “We place lenses on our eyes to see as fully and accurately as we can what there is to see. One of the purposes of celebrating the Eucharist is to place *paschal* lenses on our eyes. Why paschal? Because when the dying and rising of Christ is the prism through which we look at life, through which we evaluate ourselves, our lives, and everything in them, then

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<sup>2</sup> Khaled Anatolios, “Be Realistic, Christ is Risen!” in *Feasts for the Kingdom: Sermons for the Liturgical Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 181.

<sup>3</sup> See Khaled Anatolios, “Be Realistic, Christ is Risen!” *Feasts for the Kingdom: Sermons for the Liturgical Year* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023), 179-184.

<sup>4</sup> See Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, OP, *Grace in Season: The Riches of the Gospel in Seventy Sermons* (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2019), 74.

we can say that the paschal mystery becomes the true measure of who we are and what we are about. These paschal lenses help us to see what is really real. The perspective is faith, not just eyesight. ‘We walk by faith, and not by sight...’ The challenge here is to allow Christ’s obedient life, suffering, passion, death, resurrection, and ascension to be the prism we use to evaluate what really matters in our lives. The celebration of the Eucharist is crucial if we are to allow this way of looking at life to be ‘second nature.’ But because it is often not second nature, we need the repeated ritual enactment of Christ’s paschal mystery to take deep root in our lives.”<sup>5</sup>

Our Easter Sunday Mass 2024 occurs during the National Eucharistic Revival, a time appointed by the Bishops of the United States for all Catholics to grow in understanding and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, really and truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Let’s allow the Eucharistic charity that flows from the Eucharistic Revival to touch the wounds of those suffering in the Middle East, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti and all war torn and violence-ridden areas of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Let’s allow the Eucharistic charity that flows from the Eucharistic Revival to touch the wounds of our Church and our nation.

In his Easter homilies since 2013, our Holy Father Pope Francis makes frequent reference to Galilee in light of Christ’s Resurrection. The women and the disciples are told: “Do not be afraid, he has risen! He awaits you in Galilee.”

To go to Galilee means to begin anew, to get a fresh start. For the disciples it meant returning to the place where Jesus first called them, the place where they left their fishing nets and tax accounts behind and followed Jesus as he preached, taught, healed, and performed miracles in his public ministry.

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<sup>5</sup> Msgr. Kevin Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 142-143.

<sup>6</sup> See Pope Francis’ March 31, 2024 Easter Sunday *Urbi et Orbi* Address for his specific intentions for peace and justice in the world:  
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2024/3/31/urbi-et-orbi.html>

The disciples so often misunderstood Our Lord's words and even abandoned him and fled at the Crucifixion.

But the experience of Galilee illumined by the Resurrection appearances of the Risen Lord will be quite different.<sup>7</sup>

The Risen Jesus, despite the betrayals and abandonment of his disciples, will say to them as he says to us on this Easter morning: "Peace be with you."

Their hearts will burn with His Risen presence, His interpretation of the Scriptures and at the breaking of the bread.

Their hearts will burn with their courageous missionary witness to the Resurrection.

Going to Galilee with the Risen Lord and with his disciples helps us to face our sins, our failures, our falls, our betrayals, our weaknesses, "the rubble of our hearts" and to begin anew and to set out on new paths of grace, hope and conversion.

The Holy Father says: "To return to Galilee means to *re-read* everything on the basis of the cross and its victory, fearlessly."<sup>8</sup>

On this Easter Sunday morning, we put on Paschal Mystery lenses to re-read our past, our present, and our future through the light, the hope, and the power of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We return to Galilee with the Risen Christ.

And so I'll end where I began – with the same quote from G.K. Chesterton:

"Christendom has had a series of revolutions and in each one of them Christianity has died. Christianity has died many times and risen again; for it had a God who knew the way out of the grave."

This Easter and every Easter we celebrate this Risen Everlasting Man who knew his way out of the grave and who invites us, the Catholic Church on Long Island, and the Universal Church to a great Resurrection.

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<sup>7</sup> See Pope Francis, Easter Vigil Homily, given at St. Peter's Basilica on April 3, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, Easter Vigil Homily, given at the Vatican Basilica on April 19, 2014.

